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ABSTRACT

Two developmental stage theories concerned with moral development (Kohlberg) and ego development (Loevinger) were compared. Correlational relationships between the stages of each theory were measured, and a contingency table that visually portrayed the relationships between the stages was included. The study was based on two hypotheses: (1) There would be a high, positive correlation between the Loevinger and Kohlberg stages; and (2) The ego development test could be broken down into its various components. The Kohlberg Moral Development Test and the Loevinger Sentence Completion Test were the instruments used for assessment. Subjects included a group of 11- 15-year-old middle-class children to tap the lower ego levels, a group of young adults, clinical psychologists and psychiatric social workers. Analysis of results supported the first hypothesis, and the contingency table revealed clear parallels between the two series. The second hypothesis, however, was rejected. Discussion focused on characteristics of the instruments of measurement and theoretical implications. (DP)

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COMPARISON OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES OF EGO AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

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Loevinger (1966), Loevinger, Wessler, & Redmore, 1970), and Kohlberg (1958, 1963) have presented two independently derived developmental stage theories with considerable overlap in both the order and content of the stages. Kohlberg was interested solely in the stages of moral development; Loevinger, in the stages of ego development. However, in the process of defining ego development, Loevinger included moral development as a facet of, but not the totality of, ego development. The study reported here compared the stages of the moral and ego development theories to one another.

The investigation of the relationships between these two stage theories was undertaken in two ways. Quantitatively the study sought to measure the degree of relationship between the stages of each theory. Descriptively the study set out to generate a contingency table visually portraying the relationships between the various stages of ego and moral development. It was thought that this table would provide the opportunity to describe each stage of each theory in terms of the stages in the other theory to which it corresponds.

Two specific hypotheses were tested in the statistical analyses of the data. They were as follows: (*a*) Individuals who score high on ego development will score high on moral development; individuals who score low on ego development will receive a low score on moral development. A high, positive correlation between the Loevinger stages and the Kohlberg stages was predicted. (*b*) The ego development test could be broken down into its various components. The research was planned to identify those stems on the sentence completion test that, either singly or in combination, accounted for the obtained measure of the relationship between the ego and moral development tests. It was theorized that a small number of stems that were providing the moral loading in the Loevinger test would be isolated.

Kohlberg's test of moral development was developed over a decade ago and has been successfully used in a variety of studies. It was hoped that through a detailed comparison of Loevinger's ego development test and Kohlberg's moral development test, a necessary first step was being taken with respect to establishing the Loevinger test as a valid and workable instrument for future behavioral science research.

METHOD

Subjects

The design of the research called for obtaining approximately equal numbers of *S*s at each of the levels of ego development as measured by the Loevinger Sentence Completion Test (LSCT). All *S*s were also given the Kohlberg Moral Development Test (KMDT). The lower ego levels were tapped by testing 11- and 15-yr.-old children. The higher levels were filled by testing groups of young adults, clinical psychologists, and psychiatric social workers.

Sample 1 consisted of 35 11-yr.-old middle-class white American-born children who were attending the public schools in Alsip, Ill. There were 17 males and 18 females.

Sample 2 consisted of 24 15-yr.-old middle-class white American-born children who were attending the public schools in Alsip, Ill. There were 10 males and 14 females.

Sample 3 consisted of 15 middle-class white American-born male young adults. Their ages ranged from 20 to 27 with a mean age of 24.2. These were men who had attended high school in Alsip, Ill.

Sample 4 consisted of 14 members of the Department of Psychology, Illinois State Psychiatric Institute, Chicago. There were 11 men and 5 women. They were all white American-born individuals whose ages ranged from 26 to 60 with a mean age of 38.3. Seven of these *S*s had obtained PhDs and the remaining 7 had either an MA in psychology or its equivalent.

Sample 5 consisted of five social workers from the staff of the Department of Social Service, Illinois State Psychiatric Institute, Chicago. There were two males and three females. They were all white American-born individuals whose age range was from 25 to 50 with a mean age of 34.6. All had received the MSW degree.

Sample 6 consisted of 14 graduate students attending a course in counseling in Loyola University's Masters in Pastoral Counseling Program. There were 5 men and 9 women. Their ages ranged from 21 to 60 with a mean age of 32.9. They were all white and American born.

Instruments and Scoring Methods

Each *S* was given four of Kohlberg's Moral Dilemmas and Loevinger's Ego Development Sentence Completion Test. Approximately half of the *S*s took the Kohlberg test first and half took the Loevinger test first. The Kohlberg instrument (Situations 1, 3, 4, and 8) was administered individually while the Loevinger test was group administered for all samples except Sample 3. The *S*s in Sample 3 came from a research project in which the LSCT had been individually administered. The administration instructions for all *S*s were those suggested by the authors of the test instruments. All of the test administration and scoring was done by trained examiners and trained raters. All scoring was done out of context and according to the rules described in Loevinger's and Kohlberg's scoring manuals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relationship between the tests. The obtained Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between the total protocol rating on the LSCT and the global rating on the KMDT was .80, showing that, with a high degree of

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regularity, individuals who scored high on one test tended to score high on the other. Similarly, those persons scoring low on one test tended to score low on the second. Therefore Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Stage by stage comparisons. The contingency table of ego and moral development scores is presented in Table 1.

A striking aspect of Table 1 was the extent of correspondence between the Loevinger pure stages (i.e., 2, D, 3, 4, and 5) and the Kohlberg stages. Clear parallels between the two series emerged. They were Loevinger stage 2 with Kohlberg stage 2; Loevinger Delta with Kohlberg 3; 3 with 4; 4 with 5; and 5 with 6.

The most important result learned from Table 1 was that all ego development transition stages were virtually identical to the preceding stage with respect to distribution of their moral development scores. In other words, individuals who scored 3/4 on the LSCT could not be discriminated from individuals who scored 3 on the LSCT with respect to their moral development. The same could be said of D/3 and D *S*s and also 4/5 and 4 individuals. This was an important finding because researchers working intensively with the LSCT and theory (including the author) have a deep commitment to the belief that 3/4 *S*s *are* different from 3s and that 4/5 individuals *are* distinguishable from 4s on the basis of their sentence completion responses. Since this was so, the following question had to be answered: "What was the basis for differentiating the transitional phases from the stages preceding them?" Based upon the data the answer was clear. Transitional stages must have been distinguished from preceding stages on the basis of other traits or characteristics of ego development besides moral development. Carried one step further, this line of reasoning led to the conclusion that the development of moral judgments is preceded by the development of other ego abilities in the transition from one ego level to the next.

TABLE 1

Contingency Table: Kohlberg Test X Loevinger Test

Loevinger stage	Kohlberg stage						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2	3	9	4				16
D	5	2	8	3			19
D/3		3	8	2			13
3			3	7	1		11
3/4		4	6	11	2		23
4				4	13	1	18
4/5				3	14	1	18
5						1	1
Total	8	18	30	30	30	3	119

The moral factor in the ego development test. The first step in testing the second hypothesis was to generate correlation coefficients between the scores to each of the stems on the LSCT and the global Kohlberg score. The correlations ranged from .65 to .34 in a fairly continuous manner. It was neither statistically nor theoretically possible to specify a cut-off point and argue that items whose correlations were above this level were more significantly related to the Kohlberg scores than items with lower correlations. The second approach attempted to discover whether a small group of stems was providing the moral factor in the ego development test by employing stepwise multiple-regression analyses. By forcing each stem to be first in the regression equation on separate computer runs, it was possible to determine the amount that each stem contributed to the prediction of the Kohlberg global scores. The results of the analyses showed that all the items on the LSCT were related to the Kohlberg test in such a way that a moral factor could not be isolated in the responses to a limited number of stems on the LSCT. The second hypothesis of the study was therefore rejected.

The author believes that the results of this study are best explained by the assumption that there are changing cognitive-developmental structures underlying both tests employed in this research. It can also be argued that the changes in the cognitive and affective structures underlying both tests represent hierarchical reintegrations in the development of a master trait that can justifiably be labeled *ego* development.

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